



POSITION STATEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

**SENATE BILL 862 – BALTIMORE CITY – MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION –
TRANSIT SERVICES FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS AND YOUTH WORKERS**

Sponsor – Senator McCray

March 29, 2022

**DONALD C. FRY
PRESIDENT & CEO
GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

Position: Support

Senate Bill 862 would require the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) to provide rides on its transit system to any eligible Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) student. Services must be provided from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily for school-related or educational extra-curricular activities, on or off school grounds. As amended, the bill would also require the MTA to provide transit service to a youth worker in the Baltimore City YouthWorks program.

Seventy-three percent of the City Schools middle and high school student population rely on the MTA to get to school and school-related activities, which accounts for 18% of MTA’s annual ridership of core service. Currently, City Schools reimburse the MTA for rides taken by its students. Each student is permitted only two trips per day. For the last four years, the State has provided City Schools with the funds to reimburse the MTA. For the first three years, the funding was provided as part of legislation guiding the transition to the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. Due to pandemic funding concerns and the delayed implementation of the Blueprint, the State continued the payment for the current school year.

Senate Bill 862 would simplify the process of counting student rides and reimbursing the MTA. It would also ensure that students have access to transportation for the school day, after school activities, and internship opportunities. The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) contends that participation in work-based learning opportunities is crucial to prepare students for future careers. Participation in such opportunities or in educational extra-curricular activities should not be limited to those who can afford to pay for transportation.

In June 2021, the Fund for Educational Excellence released its report, “Not in Service: Why Public Transit Must Aim to Serve Students.” The report described the inadequacy of the current program for many City School students. Not only do many students need more than two rides per day, but the current MTA system is inadequate to properly meet the needs of student riders.

The report recommended that City Schools, the City of Baltimore, and the MTA work together to redesign the transportation model for students. Eliminating the limit on the number of student rides per day and simplifying the accounting process is an excellent start. Once this is accomplished, the MTA should explore other ways to improve the system for student riders, including more frequent buses, improving safety at stops, and creating a digital pass for students.

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Finally, a young person's need for transportation isn't limited to attending school. One of the biggest barriers for Baltimore's youth who want to participate in the annual summer YouthWorks program is a lack of affordable, reliable transportation. This bill will ensure that all who want to participate in the YouthWorks program have transportation.

For all of these reasons, the GBC respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 862.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 67-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.